

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 10098

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CSCE, UR
SUBJECT: EMBASSY ATTENDANCE AT TRIALS OF HELSINKI MONITORS

REF: STATE 109213

1. EMBASSY WOULD SUGGEST REPLY TO CONGRESSMAN FASCELL ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: BEGIN QUOTE: DEAR DANTE: I APPRECIATE YOUR THOUGHTFUL LETTER ON THE PLIGHT OF THOSE MEMBERS OF THE VARIOUS AFFILIATES OF THE HELSINKI MONITORING GROUP WHO ARE IMPRISONED IN THE SOVIET UNION AND AWAITING TRIAL. YOUR SUGGESTION THAT OUR EMBASSY IN MOSCOW REQUEST PERMISSION FOR AN EMBASSY OFFICER TO OBSERVE THE TRIALS OF HELSINKI GROUP MEMBERS IMPRISONED IN CITIES OTHER THAN MOSCOW HAS BEEN CAREFULLY CONSIDERED.

2. "WE THINK THERE IS SOME POSSIBILITY -- ADMITTEDLY SMALL -- THAT THE SOVIETS WILL ALLOW US TO ATTEND THE TRIALS OF SHCHARANSKIY, ORLOV AND GINZBURG, IF SUCH TRIALS SHOULD OCCUR. WE BELIEVE THAT EXPANDING OUR REQUEST TO INCLUDE ALL OF THE OTHER ARRESTED HELSINKI GROUP MEMBERS WOULD VIRTUALLY ELIMINATE EVEN THIS LIMITED POSSIBILITY, WITHOUT BEING OF SIGNIFICANT BENEFIT TO THOSE IMPRISONED IN THE UKRAINE, LITHUANIA, GEORGIA AND ARMENIA. WHILE THE SOVIETS

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MIGHT BE WILLING TO PERMIT US TO ATTEND ONE SET OF TRIALS IN MOSCOW, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE DEMONSTRATIVELY WIDE-SPREAD INTEREST IN THE U.S. IN THE PRISONERS CONCERNED, IF WE EXPAND OUR REQUEST TO INCLUDE ALL OTHER CSCE-RELATED TRIALS, IN WHICH THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY LESS INTEREST VOICED IN THE UNITED STATES, WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THE SOVIETS' REJECTING ALL OF THE REQUESTS IN ORDER TO AVOID

SETTING A PRECEDENT.

3. "AS YOU INDICATED IN YOUR LETTER, OFFICIAL EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN DO SOMETIMES IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF SOVIET CITIZENS, ALTHOUGH RECENT EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT IN OTHER CASES SUCH EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN APPEAR TO HAVE HAD LITTLE OR NO EFFECT. IN THE CASE OF THE IMPRISONED HELSINKI GROUP MEMBERS, THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP CANNOT BUT BE AWARE OF OUR CONCERN, WHICH HAS BEEN EXPRESSED AT THE BELGRADE CSCE REVIEW MEETING, AS WELL AS IN PRIVATE MEETINGS WITH SOVIET OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS. WE DO NOT THINK THAT OUR SEEKING TO ATTEND THESE TRIALS WOULD PROVIDE A MORE SIGNIFICANT EXPRESSION OF CONCERN THAN THOSE WE HAVE GIVEN, BUT WOULD HAVE THE DISADVANTAGE I INDICATED ABOVE, OF ELIMINATING FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES THE POSSIBILITY OF OUR QUIETLY OBTAINING AGREEMENT TO ATTEND THE TRIALS OF THE THREE MOST PROMINENT HELSINKI GROUP MEMBERS.

4. "THESE ARE NOT EASY OR CLEAR-CUT JUDGMENTS TO MAKE. WE SHARE YOUR CONCERN FOR ALL INDIVIDUALS IMPRISONED IN CONNECTION WITH THE CSCE MONITORING EFFORT. THE ISSUE IS HOW WE CAN USE TO BEST ADVANTAGE OUR LIMITED INFLUENCE IN A QUESTION WHICH SOVIET AUTHORITIES REGARD AS WITHIN THEIR DOMESTIC COMPETENCE. OUR CONSIDERED JUDGMENT AT THIS POINT IS THAT WE SHOULD FOCUS OUR EFFORTS ON GAINING ATTENDANCE AT THE PRINCIPAL TRIALS -- THOSE OF SHCHERANSKIY, CONFIDENTIAL

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ORLOV AND GINZBURG.

5. "I WOULD, OF COURSE, BE HAPPY TO HAVE THE BENEFIT OF YOUR FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THIS SUBJECT. I APPRECIATE YOUR EFFORTS AND THOSE OF THE CSCE COMMISSION TOWARD PROMOTING THE HUMANITARIAN GOALS THAT WE SHARE." TOON

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